

Supervisor Implementation Guide

Applying the Four Domains in Daily Leadership

SUPERVISORY PURPOSE

This guide helps supervisors translate Knowledge, Skill, Judgment, and Values into fair, observable, and developmental leadership practice. It provides a repeatable process for understanding performance, coaching usable alternatives, documenting proportionately, and following through.

Supervisors are the point where organizational doctrine becomes employee experience. Their daily choices determine whether professional competence is developed through clear expectations and credible feedback or reduced to a form, label, or after-the-fact judgment.

Professional Competence Enterprise™

Knowledge • Skill • Judgment • Values

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Purpose and Intended Use

This guide gives supervisors a practical method for strengthening performance during routine work. The method begins with facts, respects operational context, distinguishes development from discipline, and requires follow-up. It is designed to support—not replace—agency policy, collective bargaining obligations, legal review, human-resources processes, and formal investigative procedures.

The Supervisor Commitment

- Set expectations before judging performance.
- Ask before assuming.
- Describe behavior rather than assigning character labels.
- Separate lawful authority, outcome, process quality, and public experience.
- Coach an alternative the employee can actually use.
- Document only what is necessary, accurate, and authorized.
- Follow up so development becomes observable practice.

What This Guide Does Not Authorize

- Independent creation of new disciplinary standards or personnel rules.
- Use of developmental notes outside established access, retention, or due-process requirements.
- Clinical, legal, or investigative conclusions beyond the supervisor's authority.
- Scores or labels that claim to determine an employee's overall professional competence.

IMPLEMENTATION BOUNDARY

When facts suggest misconduct, safety risk, discrimination, retaliation, criminal conduct, policy-mandated reporting, or another matter requiring formal action, preserve information and follow the authorized reporting or investigative process.

The Four Domains in Supervisory Practice

The Four Domains are distinct but interdependent. A supervisor should identify which domain or combination of domains is relevant before deciding what kind of support or accountability is appropriate.

Domain	Supervisory Question	Observable Evidence
Knowledge	What must the employee understand?	Explanation, recall, interpretation, recognition of limits
Skill	What must the employee be able to perform?	Technique, communication, execution, adaptability, consistency
Judgment	How does the employee assess and decide?	Fact gathering, options, risk, proportionality, timing, rationale
Values	What principles guide the choice and conduct?	Fairness, respect, courage, honesty, accountability, stewardship

Avoid Domain Collapse

Common Shortcut	What It Misses
The employee knew the policy, so performance was competent.	Knowledge does not establish skill, judgment, values, or execution.
The outcome was acceptable, so the process was sound.	A good outcome may follow weak reasoning, communication, or unnecessary risk.
The employee meant well, so coaching is unnecessary.	Positive intent does not eliminate a development need.
The person is experienced, so the issue was an exception.	Experience is context, not proof of present competence.
The public complained, so misconduct occurred.	Public concern is relevant information, not a complete factual finding.

Supervisory Standard

Use the domains to organize inquiry and development—not to force every interaction into four separate deficiencies. Sometimes one domain is central; sometimes the concern lies in integration under pressure.

Supervisory Development Cycle

A reliable process protects both performance and fairness. Supervisors can use the following cycle during informal coaching, structured debriefs, performance development, and preparation for formal processes.

Step	Supervisor Action	Result
1 Prepare	Clarify purpose, authority, known facts, unknowns, and urgency.	A neutral and proportionate opening
2 Observe	Identify specific behavior, context, and impact.	A fact-based performance description
3 Inquire	Invite the employee's account and ask focused follow-up questions.	Relevant context and reasoning
4 Analyze	Consider the Four Domains and applicable standards.	A defensible developmental focus
5 Coach	Identify or elicit a specific, usable alternative.	A practical improvement strategy
6 Confirm	Ask the employee to explain or rehearse the next action.	Demonstrated understanding
7 Follow Up	Observe again, recognize progress, and address remaining gaps.	Reinforced transfer to practice

Proportionality Test

- Is the concern specific enough to discuss fairly?
- Is immediate action required for safety, law, or policy?
- Does the situation call for clarification, coaching, correction, referral, or formal process?
- What information could change the supervisory response?
- What follow-up would be reasonable given the concern and role?

CORE RULE

Do not decide the entire meaning of an event before hearing the employee's account and examining the available evidence—unless immediate action is required to protect safety, preserve evidence, or comply with law or policy.

Development Coaching and Formal Accountability

Effective supervision requires both development and accountability. Fairness depends on distinguishing their purposes, authorities, records, and consequences.

Response	Primary Purpose	Typical Use	Key Safeguard
Clarification	Resolve uncertainty	Expectation or facts are unclear	No implied finding before inquiry
Coaching	Build understanding or capability	Performance can improve through guidance and practice	Specific behavior and usable alternative
Corrective direction	Stop or change conduct within supervisory authority	An expectation is clear and action is required	Proportionate instruction and documented basis
Development plan	Address a recurring or meaningful capability gap	Practice, support, and review are needed over time	Measures, resources, timeline, follow-up
Formal referral	Activate authorized review or investigation	Facts may require HR, command, legal, or investigative process	Preserve neutrality and procedural rights
Discipline	Apply an authorized consequence after required process	Established conduct warrants formal accountability	Policy, evidence, consistency, and due process

Before Moving From Coaching to Formal Process

- Identify the triggering fact or threshold.
- Consult required policy, command, human-resources, legal, or labor resources.
- Preserve relevant evidence without conducting an unauthorized investigation.
- Explain the change in process to the employee when permitted.
- Keep developmental opinions separate from verified findings.

Never Promise

Do not promise confidentiality, a particular outcome, immunity from discipline, or that informal coaching will remain informal if later information triggers a mandatory process.

Prepare the Conversation

PREPARE

Enter with a clear purpose and an open mind.

- State the observable event or performance question in neutral language.
- Separate what is known, reported, inferred, and still unknown.
- Identify applicable expectations without assuming a violation.
- Choose a setting and timing that protect privacy and operational readiness.
- Decide what outcome is appropriate for this conversation: understanding, coaching, direction, referral, or follow-up.

Conversation Planner

Prompt	Supervisor Notes
Purpose of the conversation	_____
Known facts and sources	_____ _____
Important unknowns	_____ _____
Relevant policy or expectation	_____
Potential domain focus	Knowledge / Skill / Judgment / Values / Integration
Immediate risk or reporting duty	_____
Questions to ask	_____ _____
Possible follow-up	_____

Neutral Opening

“I want to understand what occurred, how you assessed it, and whether there is anything we should reinforce or improve. Walk me through the event from your perspective.”

Observe and Describe Performance

OBSERVE

Describe conduct in a way another reviewer could understand.

- Identify what was said or done, when, and under what conditions.
- Include relevant operational demands, available information, and constraints.
- Distinguish the employee’s conduct from the outcome and from others’ reactions.
- State impact without exaggeration or speculation.
- Avoid labels such as bad attitude, poor judgment, unprofessional, or resistant unless defined by specific behavior.

From Label to Observation

Unsupported Label	Behavioral Description
Poor judgment	Selected option A after identifying risks B and C but did not consider available option D.
Bad attitude	Interrupted twice, spoke over the explanation, and ended the exchange before confirming the assignment.
Unprofessional	Used the phrase quoted here, at this volume and point in the interaction, after the person asked this question.
Not a leader	Did not assign roles, check understanding, or revisit the plan after conditions changed.
Does not care	Did not complete the agreed follow-up by the stated date and did not notify the supervisor of a barrier.

Observation Test

Could the employee recognize the event being described? Could another supervisor distinguish the observation from interpretation? Is the description detailed enough to support coaching without becoming an unnecessary narrative?

Inquire Before Concluding

INQUIRE

Use questions to understand facts, reasoning, and experience—not to disguise an accusation.

- Begin with an open account before narrowing the inquiry.
- Ask what information the employee had at the time, not what became known later.
- Explore alternatives considered, risks perceived, and reasons for the choice.
- Ask how communication may have been experienced by others.
- Test understanding of policy and role expectations without turning the conversation into trivia.

Focused Questions by Domain

Domain	Questions
Knowledge	What guidance applied? What did you understand it to require? What remained unclear?
Skill	What did you do first? What technique did you use? Where did execution become difficult?
Judgment	What facts mattered most? What options did you consider? What risk were you managing?
Values	Whose interests were affected? How did fairness, respect, honesty, or accountability guide you?
Integration	What changed under pressure? Which capability would help you perform more reliably next time?

Questions to Avoid

- “Why would you do something like that?”
- “You knew better, didn’t you?”
- “Don’t you think you owe everyone an apology?”
- “Why are you always defensive?”

These questions contain conclusions, invite self-protection, and make it harder to gather reliable information.

Analyze the Four Domains

After gathering relevant facts, identify the smallest accurate developmental focus. Do not assign a concern to every domain merely because all four domains are part of the doctrine.

Evidence Pattern	Possible Focus	Supervisor Response
Can explain the rule but cannot perform the task reliably	Skill	Demonstrate, practice, observe, and give feedback
Can perform in routine conditions but not when variables change	Judgment or integration	Use scenarios, options analysis, and decision rehearsal
Acts quickly but cannot explain the factual or policy basis	Knowledge or judgment	Clarify standards and practice articulating rationale
Technically effective conduct creates avoidable fairness or trust concerns	Values or integration	Examine impact, legitimacy, communication, and alternatives
Understands and agrees but does not consistently follow through	Skill, values, systems, or accountability	Identify barriers, expectations, supports, and consequences
Several employees show the same gap	Training, policy, workload, supervision, or system issue	Escalate beyond an individual explanation

Supervisor Reflection

- What evidence supports the domain focus?
- What evidence does not fit the initial interpretation?
- Could unclear direction, workload, training, equipment, policy, staffing, or culture be contributing?
- Am I evaluating the employee's decision using information unavailable at the time?
- Would I describe the same conduct the same way if another employee performed it?

Coach a Usable Alternative

COACH

Turn a broad expectation into an action the employee can perform.

- Name the specific behavior or decision to strengthen.
- Explain why it matters to safety, service, legitimacy, teamwork, or performance.
- Ask the employee to generate one or more realistic alternatives.
- Refine the alternative so it preserves lawful authority and operational purpose.
- Practice concise wording or decision steps when performance under pressure is required.

Broad Direction and Usable Coaching

Broad Direction	Usable Alternative
Improve your attitude.	When you disagree, state the concern once, identify the operational risk, and confirm the final direction before acting.
Communicate better.	Acknowledge the question, give the reason that can be shared, set a clear boundary, and provide the available follow-up route.
Use better judgment.	Pause long enough to identify the objective, immediate risk, lawful options, likely effects, and trigger for changing course.
Be a leader.	Assign roles, confirm understanding, monitor conditions, and conduct a brief learning review afterward.
Write a better report.	State the facts supporting the action, distinguish observation from inference, and explain the decision sequence.

Coaching Question

“What could you say or do differently next time that would preserve the legitimate objective while improving clarity, fairness, safety, or control?”

Confirm Understanding and Commitment

CONFIRM

Require the employee to demonstrate the next step rather than merely agree.

- Ask for a summary in the employee's own words.
- Use a brief scenario or rehearsal when communication or judgment is involved.
- Clarify the standard, support, timeline, and evidence of improvement.
- Identify barriers the supervisor must address.
- State any consequence or escalation accurately and only within authority.

Confirmation Methods

Method	Useful When	Example
Teach back	Knowledge or expectation is central	"Explain how you understand the requirement and its limits."
Rehearsal	Communication or technique must be usable	"Give me the first two sentences you would use."
Decision walk-through	Judgment under changing conditions is central	"At what point would you change course, and why?"
Work sample	Quality of execution can be reviewed	"Complete the revised report section using the agreed approach."
Observation plan	Transfer must be seen in practice	"I will observe the next briefing and we will debrief afterward."

Avoid False Closure

"Understood," "yes, Sergeant," or a signature may show acknowledgment, but not necessarily understanding, capability, or commitment. Confirm what the employee will do differently and how both parties will know.

Follow Up and Reinforce Transfer

FOLLOW UP

Make development visible over time.

- Set a follow-up point proportionate to the concern.
- Observe the relevant behavior or review an appropriate work product.
- Recognize specific improvement, not personality or loyalty.
- Address remaining gaps with evidence and additional support.
- Close the development cycle when the expected practice is demonstrated consistently.

Follow Up Plan

Element	Plan
Expected behavior	_____
Practice or support	_____
Evidence to review	_____
Observation date	_____
Employee responsibility	_____
Supervisor responsibility	_____
Progress noted	_____ _____
Next decision	Close / Continue / Revise / Refer

Reinforcement Standard

Recognition should identify what improved and why it matters: “During today’s briefing, you stated the objective, invited questions, and confirmed assignments before deployment. That improved clarity and reduced the need for correction later.”

Document Proportionately

Documentation should preserve a useful and accurate record without turning every coaching conversation into an unofficial disciplinary file. Follow agency rules governing format, access, retention, disclosure, and employee response.

Include	Avoid
Date, purpose, and participants	Inflammatory titles or conclusions
Relevant observable facts and sources	Rumor presented as fact
Employee account and material context	Selective omission of exculpatory context
Applicable expectation	New standards invented after the event
Coaching or direction provided	Vague statements such as counseled appropriately
Employee understanding or response	Claims of agreement when only acknowledgment occurred
Support, follow-up, and status	Indefinite monitoring without purpose or endpoint

Coaching Record

Field	Entry
Performance focus	_____
Observable facts	_____ _____
Employee perspective	_____ _____
Domain and rationale	_____
Agreed alternative	_____
Support and follow-up	_____
Supervisor / employee acknowledgment	_____

Fairness and Legitimacy Safeguards

Supervisors strengthen legitimacy when employees experience the process as clear, respectful, evidence-based, and proportionate—even when direction or accountability is required.

Safeguard	Supervisory Practice
Voice	Allow a meaningful account and focused response before concluding.
Neutrality	Distinguish evidence, allegation, inference, and decision.
Respect	Protect dignity, avoid humiliation, and communicate expectations directly.
Trustworthy motive	Explain the legitimate purpose and avoid manipulating process to reach a predetermined result.
Consistency	Use comparable standards while considering relevant differences in context.
Transparency	Describe the process, decision authority, next step, and permitted use of records.
Correction	Provide a way to correct material factual errors when policy permits.

Bias Interruption Questions

- What facts support my conclusion?
- What alternative explanation should I test?
- Am I treating communication style as misconduct without a defined standard?
- Have I considered assignment, workload, training, access, and prior direction?
- Would I make the same decision for a similarly situated employee?
- Who should review this decision before it becomes consequential?

FAIRNESS STANDARD

Consistency does not mean ignoring context. It means applying relevant standards through a comparable, explainable process while considering legitimate differences in circumstance.

High Pressure and Public Facing Events

A lawful or safely resolved event may still reveal communication, judgment, or legitimacy concerns. Conversely, a complaint, edited video, or negative reaction does not by itself establish misconduct. Supervisors must hold both propositions at the same time.

Balanced Review

Review Question	Purpose
What immediate safety or enforcement issue existed?	Establish operational context and lawful objective.
What occurred before the recording or complaint began?	Identify relevant missing sequence without dismissing available evidence.
What does the available evidence actually show?	Separate authentic observation from broader inference.
What did the employee say and do?	Identify specific public-facing conduct.
How might the interaction reasonably have been experienced?	Examine voice, explanation, neutrality, respect, and trust.
What alternative could preserve authority and improve the process?	Create a realistic developmental response.
What requires additional formal review?	Protect fairness and evidentiary integrity.

Supervisory Language

“The available video is relevant, but it begins late and does not establish the entire encounter. We will review what it shows, what it does not show, your account, the report, available recordings, and the operational context before reaching conclusions.”

Supervisor Calibration

Supervisors need a shared interpretation of evidence and expectations. Calibration is a learning process—not a search for identical personalities, identical wording, or automatic ratings.

Monthly Calibration Routine

Step	Activity
Select	Choose one de-identified coaching example, work product, or scenario.
Describe	Each supervisor identifies observable facts before interpretation.
Analyze	Compare domain focus, applicable expectations, context, and missing information.
Coach	Develop one or more usable alternatives.
Safeguard	Test fairness, consistency, privacy, and process boundaries.
Align	Record agreed guidance and unresolved questions for command review.

Quality Review Questions

- Did the supervisor gather enough information for the stated purpose?
- Does the documentation distinguish fact from interpretation?
- Is the domain focus supported and proportionate?
- Is the coached alternative practical under real conditions?
- Was understanding confirmed?
- Is follow-up clear and limited to a legitimate purpose?

Escalate System Patterns

When multiple employees struggle with the same expectation, supervisors should examine training, policy, equipment, staffing, workload, incentives, and leadership messages before treating the pattern as a collection of unrelated individual failures.

The First 90 Days for Supervisors

Window	Supervisor Actions	Evidence of Progress
Days 1-30 Establish	Learn the doctrine and boundaries; explain expectations; inventory recurring coaching needs; begin neutral observation and inquiry.	Team briefing, baseline examples, questions logged
Days 31-60 Practice	Use the development cycle in routine debriefs; rehearse difficult conversations; participate in calibration; identify system barriers.	Coaching samples, calibration notes, barriers elevated
Days 61-90 Reinforce	Follow up on agreed behaviors; recognize improvement; review documentation quality; recommend refinements.	Follow-up evidence, quality review, improvement recommendations

Weekly Leadership Rhythm

Frequency	Practice
Each shift or work cycle	Clarify one performance expectation and notice one example worth reinforcing.
Weekly	Conduct at least one purposeful developmental conversation when warranted by evidence.
Monthly	Participate in calibration and review one coaching record for quality.
Quarterly	Discuss team patterns, system barriers, and development priorities with command.
As required	Refer formal matters promptly and preserve process boundaries.

90 DAY RESULT

At the end of 90 days, supervisors should be able to describe performance behaviorally, inquire neutrally, identify a supported domain focus, coach a usable alternative, confirm understanding, and conduct proportionate follow-up.

Supervisor Self Review

Use this brief review after significant coaching conversations or during monthly reflection. Rate each item from 1 to 5, where 1 means not yet demonstrated and 5 means consistently demonstrated with evidence.

Supervisory Practice	Rating	Evidence or Next Step
I stated a clear, neutral purpose.	1 2 3 4 5	_____
I distinguished known facts from assumptions.	1 2 3 4 5	_____
I invited and examined the employee's account.	1 2 3 4 5	_____
I identified a supported domain focus.	1 2 3 4 5	_____
I considered system and context factors.	1 2 3 4 5	_____
I coached a specific, usable alternative.	1 2 3 4 5	_____
I confirmed understanding through explanation or practice.	1 2 3 4 5	_____
I documented proportionately and accurately.	1 2 3 4 5	_____
I protected fairness, privacy, and process boundaries.	1 2 3 4 5	_____
I established or completed follow-up.	1 2 3 4 5	_____

Reflection Questions

- What did I learn that changed my initial interpretation?
- What part of the conversation produced understanding or defensiveness?
- What did I do to preserve both accountability and fairness?
- What support or authority do I need from my own supervisor?
- What will I do differently in the next conversation?

Supervisor Conversation Quick Reference

Stage	Suggested Language
Prepare	"I want to understand what occurred and identify anything we should reinforce or improve."
Observe	"The specific behavior I want to discuss is..."
Inquire	"Walk me through what you knew, what you considered, and what you were trying to accomplish."
Analyze	"The main development issue appears to involve... because the evidence shows..."
Coach	"What alternative would preserve the objective while improving safety, clarity, fairness, or control?"
Confirm	"Show me how you would handle the first part of that conversation next time."
Follow up	"We will review this again after... using the following evidence..."

Supervisor Pause Points

- I do not have enough information for a fair conclusion.
- This may require a formal process beyond my current role.
- The expectation may be unclear or inconsistent.
- The concern may reflect a broader training or system problem.
- The available evidence may have different legitimate interpretations.
- I need consultation before documenting or sharing this information.

One Minute Check

Before ending the conversation, confirm: What happened? Why does it matter? What will the employee do differently? What support will the supervisor provide? When and how will progress be reviewed?

From Guide to Agency Practice

This guide provides a common supervisory method. Sustainable implementation requires the agency to align policy, training, evaluation, documentation, promotion, accountability, privacy, records, technology, and leadership expectations around that method.

Agency Responsibilities

Agency Responsibility	Implementation Requirement
Define authority	State which conversations, records, referrals, and decisions supervisors may perform.
Prepare supervisors	Use scenarios, rehearsal, observation, feedback, and calibration—not information delivery alone.
Protect fairness	Establish due-process, access, correction, confidentiality, retention, and review safeguards.
Provide support	Ensure consultation, staffing, time, technology, and escalation channels are available.
Review patterns	Examine system barriers and unintended effects rather than locating every concern in an individual.
Sustain quality	Audit fidelity, recognize effective development, correct drift, and renew expectations.

Recommended Next Step

Use this guide during supervisor orientation and facilitated practice, then pilot the development cycle in a bounded unit or process. Review coaching quality, workforce experience, workload, and safeguards before expanding agency-wide.

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Professional Competence Enterprise™ supports agencies in adapting this guide to their policies, supervisory structure, assessment systems, documentation rules, operational environment, and implementation priorities.

This guide supports professional development and organizational planning. It does not constitute legal advice, replace agency policy or required process, or determine an employee's overall professional competence.